

The *SKIMMER*



Volume 44, Number 3—March 2017

SDFO NEWS

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, March 22, at 6:00 p.m., in the Hoffman Room of the San Diego Foundation Building, 2508 Historic Decatur Road. Going south on Rosecrans St. in the Midway area of town, turn left on Roosevelt Rd. into Liberty Station and proceed a couple of blocks to Decatur. Parking is available on the street or in the adjacent parking lots. **Note the changed date!**

Program: “2016 Cape to Cape – Crossing the Scotia Sea and South Atlantic,” by Tom Blackman.

A trip of 29 days crossing the Southern Oceans from Ushuaia, Argentina to Cape Town, South Africa photographing albatrosses, petrels, storm-petrels and other seabirds. Of particular interest were collecting images of the Great Albatrosses: Wandering and Tristan. These birds have seven and four



plumage phases respectively which will be shown. The islands visited produced endemics as well as marine mammals. One stop was Tristan da Cunha, the most remote island in the world. Some pre-trip images of Argentina and post-trip African images will also be presented.

A Point Loma native, Thomas A. Blackman graduated from SDSU with a B.S. in Zoology. Always interested in birds and photography (including having a darkroom in the spare bath while in high school and birding in local canyons), he has continued with these endeavors into retirement. His professional life included Professional Baseball (Umpire), Insurance Broker and Risk Manager in Structured Risk practices. He has birded and photographed birds worldwide including Madagascar, Uganda, Australia, Argentina, Africa, New Zealand and many pelagic trips in the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic and Subantarctic Oceans. A specialist in pelagic photography. Tom currently serves as President of Western Field Orni

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thologists and is past President of San Diego Field Ornithologists. His work has been published in periodicals, magazines and scientific papers and can be viewed at obeach.smugmug.com.

Next month's meeting: Tuesday, April 18, same time, same place. We will be back to our usual meeting date. Program: "Translocation of the Rimatara Lory in the South Pacific: Success or failure?" by Bruce Rideout, San Diego Zoo International, San Diego.

SDFO Dues for 2017 are due!

If you haven't paid up for this year, contact Membership Chair Nancy Christensen at the March meeting, or by mail. See the last page of the *Skimmer* for details.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD OBSERVATIONS, FEBRUARY 2017

Compiled by Guy McCaskie

As of January 2017, the sequencing of species in these monthly bird observation reports will follow that listed in the Fifty-seventh Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds* (*The Auk*: Ornithological Advances 133:544-560).

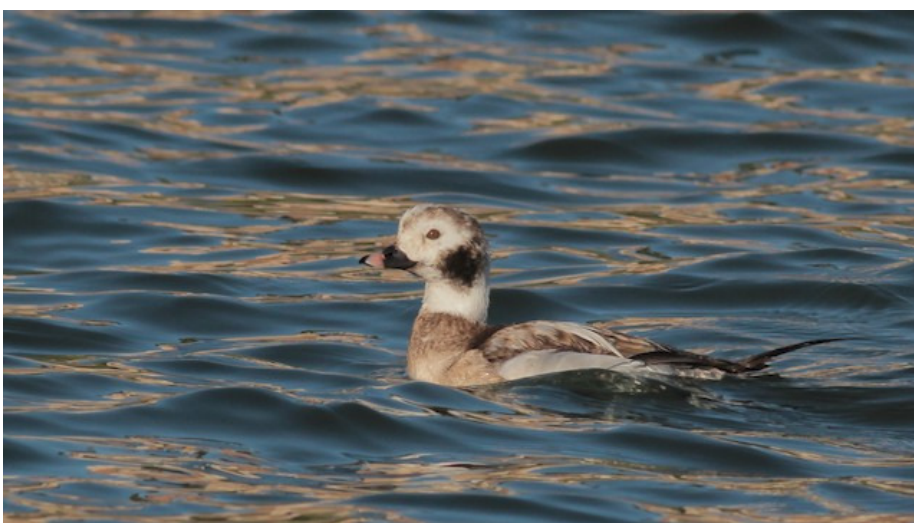
The first of the earlier spring migrants/summer visitors arrive in March, so keep your eyes and ears open for them, and post arrival dates on *SanDiegoRegionBirding*. Those early arriving species, along with the "early arrival dates" published by Unitt (2004) or later, include: Lesser Nighthawk (20 March), Black-chinned Hummingbird (15 March), Elegant Tern (3 March), Pacific-slope Flycatcher (3 March), Ash-throated Flycatcher (17 March), Western Kingbird (6 March), Bell's Vireo (13 March), Gray Vireo (14 March), Warbling Vireo (15 March), Nashville Warbler (21 March), Lucy's Warbler (11 March), Black-throated Gray Warbler (24 March), MacGillivray's Warbler (23 March), Wilson's Warbler (6 March), Black-headed Grosbeak (27 March) and Bullock's Oriole (5 March). Since most of these species regularly winter in San Diego County in small numbers, it is necessary to be sure those species reported as "first of the season" are indeed "first", and not individuals that win-

tered locally, or have been reported earlier by others. The first to arrive locally are invariably adult males, often at known nesting localities, and frequently singing.

As of the end of February the first of the spring migrant Rufous Hummingbirds was in Jacumba on 5 February (EGK). The first of the Swainson's Hawks were one over Lower Otay Lake on 1 February (JP) followed by four at Borrego Springs on 10 Feb (HC) and an amazing, for so early in the year, **498** at Borrego Springs ten days later (HC). A Cliff Swallow at Lake Hodges, a known nesting location, on 4 February (RW), was earlier by three days from the earliest arrival date of 7 February listed by Unitt (2004). A singing Black-chinned Sparrow in typical nesting habitat near Alpine on 22 February (DDiT) was followed by another singing near Lakeside on 25 February (TH), both significantly earlier than the earliest arrival date of 10 March listed by Unitt (2004). An adult male Hooded Oriole in Encinitas on 23 February (SES) was unquestionably an early arrival, but single adult males in the South Park neighbourhood of San Diego on 4 February (MW) and at Montgomery Waller Community Park in Palm City on 5 February (PEL)

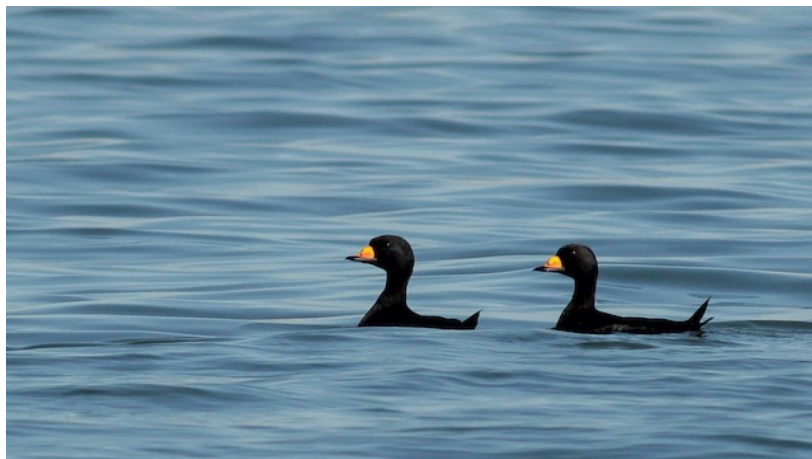
could have been early migrants, but were more likely birds wintering locally based on the earliest arrival date of 26 February listed by Unitt (2004).

Only three Eurasian Wigeon were known present in February, with the long-staying male at Famosa Slough/San Diego River Flood Control Channel since 21 September still present on 25 February (MSe), a male at San Dieguito Lagoon on 4 February (PEL), and the third at San Elijo Lagoon 5-13 February (JP, JL). A truly impressive **2100-2500** Greater Scaup on south San Diego Bay on 13 February (MSa) was far more than expected—Unitt (2004) listed this duck as “uncommon to rare”. A White-winged Scoter, now the rarest of the three species of scoter in San Diego County and most of Southern California, was at the harbor in Oceanside on 1 February (KW), and another was at Glorietta Bay in Coronado 13-28 February + (MSa, DB). The total of six Black Scoters found on south San Diego Bay on 13 Feb (MSa) undoubtedly included all of those reported at such locations as the Coronado Cays and Chula Vista’s J St. since December through 21 February. The male Long-tailed Duck found on south San Diego Bay at Delta Beach on 17 December (KR) was still present at the end of February (MSa, DB).



The Long-tailed Duck off Delta Beach on San Diego Bay on 13 February 2017—the presence of pink on the bill shows it to be a male. *Photo by Matt Sadowski.*

The Pacific Golden-Plover known to be wintering at the Tijuana River mouth was still present at the end of February (JO), and can be expected to stay through March. Six Ancient Murrelets, with two off the mouth of Mission Bay (PEL) and four more photographed near the north end of the 9-Mile Bank (ML), during the San Diego Bird Festival’s 25 February pelagic trip



These adult male Black Scoters off Grand Caribe Shoreline Park at the Coronado Cays were two of six found on San Diego Bay on 13 February 2017. *Photo by Matt Sadowski.*

were unexpected, since none were being reported from the waters off Orange and Los Angeles Counties. A Black-legged Kittiwake, scarce over Southern California waters this winter, was near the north end of the 9-Mile Bank on 25 February (PEL) and five were there the following day (JTS). A Laughing Gull, rare anywhere on the coast of California, irregularly visited

Marina View Park (J St.) in Chula Vista 19-28 February + (DDiT). An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull photographed within the South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge at the south end of San Diego Bay on 12 February (MSa) was believed to be the same bird present here last winter, and a first-winter bird was photographed at Lower Otay Lake on 14 February (MSa) – the numbers of this gull reaching California increase every year. A Common Tern over the 9-Mile Bank off San Diego on 25 February

(PEL) was most unusual, since this species is now not known to winter in California, and the earliest of the spring migrants are not expected until mid-April.

The young Tricolored Heron found at the Tijuana River mouth on 17 December (MG) remained through February (GMcC). At least three Reddish Egrets were believed present this month, with an adult at the Tijuana River mouth on 2 February (JB), an immature at various locations around south San Diego Bay through at least 24 February (RTP) and another immature commuting between Batiquitos, San Elijo and San Dieguito Lagoons 10-27 February (SB, RTP, EC). Four pairs of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons attending nests at the Imperial Beach Sports Park after 12 February (MSa, GMcC) were being accompanied by a second-year bird for an encouraging nine individuals. At least one of the two adult Zone-tailed Hawks known wintering at and around the San Diego Zoo Safari Park near Escondido was still present at the end of February (MSe), and another adult wintering in the area of the Ramona Grassland Preserve near Ramona was still present 23 February (IK).



The somewhat elusive first-winter Laughing Gull in flight at Marina View Park in Chula Vista on 19 February 2017. *Photo by Jim Pawlicki.*

The Hammond's Flycatcher known present near the Marston House in Balboa Park since 30 October (CA) was still present at the end of February (DB). A Gray Flycatcher at Mast Park in Santee 14-24 February



A first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake near the north end of the 9-Mile Bank off La Jolla on 26 February 2017 – note the dark collar and striking wing-pattern. *Photo by Max Leibowitz.*

(PEL, AS) undoubtedly wintered locally. The Eastern Phoebe found in Jacumba on 8 November was still present 16 February (EGK). The Dusky-capped Flycatcher at the San Diego Botanic Garden in Encinitas since 3 January was still present at the end of February (SES, GL) and is likely to stay through March. The Tropical Kingbird present at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach since 5 October was still there at the end of February (JB), and the one found at the ball fields on Sunset Ave. in the Tijuana River Valley on 24 February (RTP) was still present at the end of the month (GMcC). The Thick-billed Kingbird spending its 7th winter at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista remained through February (MM), and based on previous years, will stay into April before departing. The immature Scissor-tailed Flycatcher found at Fenton

Pond on the Otay River in December was last reported at the lower end of Poggi Canyon in Chula Vista on 19 February (DN), and the adult put in its last appearance at Nestor Park on 4 February (GMcC). The Eastern Bell's Vireo found in Oceanside on 30 December (TG) has not been reported since 21 February and may well have gone—Bell's Vireos are early migrants. At least five Plumbeous Vireos were known in San Diego County in February along with three Cassin's Vireos, the latter normally much the scarcer of the two in Southern California in winter. A male Mountain Bluebird at Ft. Rosecrans Cemetery on Pt. Loma 9-28 February (PA, CB) was on the immediate coast where scarce.

The secretive Ovenbird on the Otay River at Hollister St. in Palm City has not been reported since 5 February (ML), but could well still be present. Single wintering Black-and-white Warblers at San Elijo Lagoon through 5 February (JC), at Famosa Slough in Ocean Beach through 23 February (JB), and at Nestor Park in Nestor through the end of February (PN) were the only three reported this month. The MacGillivray's Warbler found near the power plant in Carlsbad on 18 January (SB) has not been seen since 4 February (TG). A Pine Warbler reported along Citrus Tree Ln. in Spring Valley on 5 February (RN) was never re-found. The known wintering Chestnut-sided Warbler along Corte Del Abeto in Carlsbad was still present at the end of February (TG), and the Black-throated Green Warbler spending its 4th winter in San Diego's Greenwood Cemetery was still present on 28 February (NC). The Painted Redstart found along the northern edge of Mission Bay at Crown Point on 11 January (DP) remained through February (JB), but can be expected to leave sometime in March. The only known White-throated Sparrow has been at a private residence in

Ocean Beach since 24 November through February (GJ). The Hepatic Tanager spending its 6th winter near the Marston House in Balboa Park remained through February 28 (ND). At least seven Summer Tanagers



The long-staying male Mountain Bluebird at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery on Point Loma on 10 February 2017. *Photo by Tawni Flick.*

were known present in the coastal lowlands from Mission Valley south to Nestor (MC, PEL, BM, JP, PN and MH). A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak joined the two wintering Black-headed Grosbeaks at a private residence in San Diego's North Park on 23 February (BM). The brightly colored male Baltimore Oriole wintering at Nestor Park and still present at the end of February (PN), along with a female at nearby Sunnyslope Park on 5 February (PEL) were the only two reported this month.

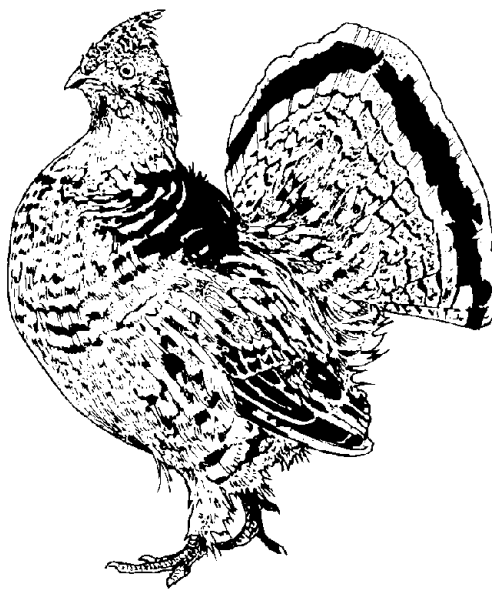
Listed observers:

Christopher Adler, Pam Albers, Chuck Barnes, Dave Batzler, Steve Brad, John Bruin, Jon Chekan, Nancy Christensen, Hal Cohen, Mauro Colabiachi, Elizabeth Copper, Nicole Desnoyers, Dean DiTommasco, Mike Goldhamer, Tito Gonzalez, Michael Hilchey, Theresa Hyde, Ginger Johnson, Eric G. Kallen, Iris Kilpatrick, Greg Laverty, Paul E. Lehman, Max Leibowitz, Jayne Lesley, Mae Mayville, Guy McCaskie, Barbara Morton, Peter Nguyen, Richard Norgaard, Dick Norton, John Oliver, Robert T. Patton, Jim Pawlicki, Kerry Ross, Matt Sadowski (MSa), Mel Senac (MSe), Ann

Sixtus, Susan E. Smith, Justyn T. Stahl, Kenneth Weaver, Martha Wild, Ron Wilson.

Literature Cited:

Unitt, P. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. Proc. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. 39. San Diego Nat. Hist. Mus., San Diego.



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